

VZCZCXRO0220  
RR RUEHCI  
DE RUEHKA #3064 1490148  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 290148Z MAY 06  
FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8156  
INFO RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 8547  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7451  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9119  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1138  
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 7721  
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 2454  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 003064

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/24/2016  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [BG](#)  
SUBJECT: UNHCR BRIEFING ON ROHINGYA CAMPS

REF: A. STATE 60235  
[1](#)B. DHAKA 2466

Classified By: D.C. McCullough, reason para 1.4 d.

[1](#)1. (C) After visiting the Rohingya refugee camps, UNHCR Bureau of Asia-Pacific Director Janet Lim briefed the diplomatic corps on the situation there and the proposed UNHCR response. The physical conditions of the camps have deteriorated since her December 2004 visit, she said, the BDG continues to be a corrupt and uncooperative implementing partner, and the UNHCR wants to develop an exit strategy in cooperation with the international community.

[1](#)2. (C) Lim suggested convening a stakeholders meeting in Geneva as a first step. In October, the UNHCR would formally invite representatives of Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and any nation that might be willing to support resettlement or integration. The tentative date for this stakeholders meeting is March 2007. The UNHCR believes it is senseless to begin the process earlier because of the Bangladeshi elections expected in January 2007. The main objective is to develop a strategy and timeline for shutting down the camps by December 2008.

[1](#)3. (C) COM's from the UK and the European Commission strongly supported the idea of camp closure and the stakeholder conference. The UK High Commissioner listed three elements for a successful plan of action: an operational plan to improve camp conditions prior to closure; a political plan to get cooperation from the BDG; and a deadline for actually closing the camps to show the BDG that the UNHCR and the international community are serious about camp closure. He also said that while the UNHCR must behave as if the December 2008 is not negotiable, they could not realistically close the camps that early.

[1](#)4. (C) The UK High Commissioner also emphasized the need to keep secret the decisions of the stakeholder conference. If the public suspects a developed country is accepting Rohingya refugees, the number of people seeking refuge could grow tenfold overnight with malafide applicants. If the BDG believes the UNHCR supports local integration, the UN will get no cooperation from the BDG on any issue. If repatriation to Myanmar is the best option, there will be allegations of forcing "defenseless" refugees back into the hands of a repressive regime.

[1](#)5. (C) There was a consensus that the best way to improve camp conditions is to stop channeling funds the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management due to their history of high cost, inefficient, and corrupt management of the camps. Several persons suggested that MFA lead a working group to

implement the sub-agreement with UNHCR. The local head of the UNHCR, Pia Prytz Phiri, said she would follow up on this suggestion.

16. (C) Comment: Rohingya refugee camps do not meet minimal international standards for food, water, shelter, health, hygiene or education. (REFTEL A) There are, however, significant problems with all the solutions suggested at this meeting. There is no reliable form of identification to stop impostors from applying for refuge, and no other country has agreed to accept the Rohingyas. The BDG has always strongly opposed local integration, and gives no indication of changing its policy. The Rohingyas who remain in Bangladesh fear persecution under the Myanmar regime, and forced repatriation is not a long term solution along a porous border. While we continue to encourage the BDG to allow UNHCR and NGO's to provide adequate services to the Rohingyas (REFTEL B), no durable solution is in sight.  
BUTENIS